

GOOD WORK

Official Bulletin of The Catholic Art Association

Printed four times a year: Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn,
with ecclesiastical approbation, at Cambridge, Massachusetts

VOLUME XXIV

SPRING 1961

NUMBER 2

CONTENTS

Perfection — <i>Editorial</i>	34
The Christian Sense of the Tragic — <i>J. J. Ryan</i>	35
The Coming Convention	40
Spring Equinox — <i>Verse</i>	40
A Traditional Carver	41
Symptom, Diagnosis and Regimen — <i>A. K. Coomaraswamy</i>	49
Some Parish Seals — <i>Clemens Schmidt and Others</i>	52
Some Rhodesian Iconographers — <i>Evelyn Waugh</i>	57

Good Work is indexed in the *Catholic Periodical Index*

MEMBERSHIP, PRIVILEGES AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Catholic Art Association is a non-profit educational organization. Membership in it is open to all, whether Catholic or not, who endorse its principles and its aims, and sign a pledge of endorsement.

The privileges of membership include the right to hold office in the Association, to vote in elections and on other matters submitted to the membership, and to receive the Association's official publication, *Good Work*. Subscribers may become members by officially endorsing the Association's principles and aims.

INDIVIDUAL	\$5.00
STUDENT	\$2.00
INSTITUTION (2 copies)	\$7.00

ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO THE CATHOLIC ART ASSOCIATION
53 RIDGEWOOD ROAD, BUFFALO 20, NEW YORK

PERFECTION



THE CHINESE LANGUAGE, so it is said, is so rich in equivocal words that often a short spoken sentence may have several distinct interpretations, and the speaker is driven to write the sentence out to make himself understood. We who speak English have no such burden of potential misunderstandings to carry, but even we use more words of double and triple meaning than we often know how to handle successfully. If we want to speak and write clearly we must be willing to spend some time in defining some of our verbal symbols. In no case is this truer than when we are talking about "art". We hear such words as *plastic, form, creative*, used with apparently little effort on the speaker's part to indicate which of various meanings is intended. We would like here to distinguish between two interpretations, often confused, of the word *perfection*.

We often say that an artist may be distinguished from a non-artistic maker of things by the perfection of his product. And we often say that the artist is to be contrasted with the patron because whereas the patron as such is interested in the function or usefulness of what is made for him, the artist is interested in its perfection as the sort of thing it is. But when we say such things we are apt to give the impression that an artist is a fussy sort of person who will take endless time and trouble in the execution of his work in order to get it exactly right, and that therefore his work must be very expensive if he is to support himself by means of it.

What we mean by artistic perfection is not a perfection that only rich people can afford, an emphasis on one aspect of right

making which ignores other even more important aspects—but rather the highest degree of fitness in the thing made for *all* the realities that cause it to be. We mean perfection in appropriateness and serviceability. The life-expectancy of the object must be taken into consideration, as well as the depth of the patron's purse. The perfection of newspaper printing is one thing, and that of a book meant to last for generations is quite another.

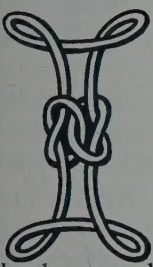
Philip Hagreen has recently said that "the perfect way to make breakable and perishable things is to make them quickly and cheaply. The things that would justify perfect making in the commonly understood meaning of perfect are very few."

Hilaire Belloc once wrote that a man's house should fit him like an old coat, or as a bear's coat fits a bear. The houses of very rich people often quite miss this standard of fittingness or suitability because so often they are furnished according to false ideas of perfection which forbid any interference. No chair or nicknack can be moved. Hardly anything can be touched, or this perfection of furnishing will be violated. As Belloc said in another passage, "there is no honest dust." A really rich life cannot be lived in the presence of such aesthetic riches.

Today, as throughout the history of human cultures, it is in the service of religion that we find some of these very few things. Here a whole community can offer a gift to God which not many individuals can pay for and none deserves. From the first, religion has been the mother of the arts. It is in the service of religion that artists can work for perfection both in the usual meaning of the word and in the broader meaning of adjustment to all the realities of the actual situation, whatever that may be.

THE CHRISTIAN SENSE OF THE TRAGIC

by JOHN JULIAN RYAN



IN ANY DISCUSSION OF the Christian sense of the tragic we are liable to fall into two grave errors. We may content ourselves with too broad or too narrow a view of the terms; and we may fail to correlate properly the tragedy of real life and the tragedy of its fictional representation.

Certainly, the words "tragic" and "tragedy" are ordinarily used in common parlance too loosely and in literary criticism too restrictedly.

Thus, to the man in the street the term "tragic," when it is applied to a story simply means "not comic," and it refers primarily to the tone of the ending of the story: if a story ends happily, it is a comedy; if it ends unhappily, it is a tragedy. Yet this criterion just does not work. More than one classic tragedy ends (like the *Ion*) with the central character better off than he was at the beginning; just as more than one classic comedy ends (like the typical one of Molière) with the central character worse off than at the beginning. And who would want to call *The Book of Job*, for all its "happy" ending, a comedy?

The other common use of the word "tragedy" is likely to be no less distracting and confusing since it is diametrically opposite to the technical use. To most persons a tragedy is: 1) something that has happened in real life and been reported in the newspapers; 2) an accident;

and 3) an event that is exceptionally saddening and distressing. Yet, technically, the word means none of these things, but rather: 1) something made up, especially a stage play; 2) a story the central event of which is never an accident pure and simple; and 3) a presentation that is not saddening, but a source of deep aesthetic delight.

If, then, we are to avoid confusion here, we shall do well to adopt a fresh method of classifying stories, one that is more general than usual, and divide them into the serious and the light, and then distinguish the serious into those that are not tragic in the best sense of the word and those that are, so that we may deal with these latter unambiguously and systematically.

For it is obvious on inspection that there can be placed under the heading of the serious a fairly large range of stories that should not properly be designated as tragic. There is a kind of detective story, for instance, that presents us with a sombre problem to be solved soberly, without the distraction of pity or fear. Again, there are the stories, like certain allegories of Hawthorne (and, for that matter, of Poe) which, though macabre, stimulate us mainly to enjoy the serious and thoughtful use of our powers in following out the implications of some insight into philosophy or morality; just as certain stories of Edith Wharton and Henry James conduct us quietly through the mazes of a dark, but not necessarily

Mr. Ryan is at present Professor of English at St. Anselm's College, Manchester, N.H., and is the author of The Idea of a Catholic College and Beyond Humanism.

tragic, problem of motivation. Finally, there are the stories that are sombre even to the point of being disagreeable—the macabre thrillers or horror stories. Gloomy, bitter, sour, sharp, they are enjoyed as mental cocktails, being relished more for their sting than for their taste.



UCH STORIES MAY BE called serious but not tragic since, from the very beginning, this latter term has been reserved for the kinds which cause us to feel a primarily religious or personal interest in their central characters. The literature which produced the tragedy was a sacred, not a secular, one. The Greek poet or playwright took it for granted that he was to meet the needs his patrons felt to be oriented wisely and reverently towards the natural, the human and the supernatural forces about them. Specifically, he felt under obligation:

- to help his audience to feel a due reverence for the gods and a deep confidence in them as aiding and sanctioning all sound and righteous action;
- to make them aware of the cosmic sublimity of man's state, and to inspire them to live heroically, in accordance with the examples of great heroes;
- to make them averse to acting arrogantly and impiously;
- to make them compassionate, lest they act coldly and cruelly.

The Greek writer was, in fact, a kind of poetic theologian who took the deposit of traditional lore and translated it into dramatic terms, in the effort to bring out the vision of reality and the wisdom implicit in this lore and to get his fellow-men to act in accordance with these. We find, therefore, that some Greek plays are designed to illustrate truths about

divine forces and man's relations to them, as well as make clear the laws of destiny and providence (the *Prometheus Bound*; the *Ion*); others, to awaken a humble awareness of the inscrutability and super-rationality of divine ways (the *Bacchae*); others, to arouse religious fear and pity for the sinner (*Oedipus Rex*); and still others, to stir up compassion (*The Trojan Women*).

Every one of these works, whether it lives up to Aristotelian canons or not, can rightly be called tragic. And once we recognize this fact, we find that we can readily distinguish all the various forms of tragedy, ancient as well as modern, on the basis of whether their effect is mainly judicial (or critical) or mainly participative. (Mainly sympathetic, if you prefer, or mainly empathetic.) In so doing, we shall also be following, almost automatically, the same order as that in which these various forms developed historically.

Although we find one or other ancient tragedy achieving every kind of tragic effect, from awe to compassion, the form that has come to be considered typical of the ancient world—partly because it was so well worked out by Sophocles and then analyzed by Aristotle—is that which stirs the judicial or critical emotions. By it we are made to feel a conscientious, a spiritual, fear and pity for someone whom we watch committing a grave sin and suffering its consequences. We identify ourselves with this person only enough to feel the sympathy for him that is required for our following his actions with interest and understanding. We are primarily interested in him, not as an adventurer, but as a sinner. Here we have the tragedy of guilt, the tragedy that sharpens our sense of the ghastliness of sin. We do not fear for, or pity, the central character merely as a loser; we fear for, and pity, him as a wrongdoer. And these emotions are suffused also with awe and reverence, a kind of *timor Dei*, as well as deepened

by pathos and compassion. This sort of tragedy, it is to be remembered, was part of a religious festival.

When we come to Shakespearean tragedy, we still have a form that evokes critical or judicial emotion; but it does not evoke these almost exclusively; it evokes general fear and pity as well, or even primarily. We are shown someone trying to extricate himself from a predicament or attain a goal, and we are made to fear for him and pity him as he fails. But since the surest source of failure is sin, we are made to feel fear and pity for the central character as sinning *ruinously*. We have here, in other words, a tragedy of failure-and-guilt or, if you will, of failure-through-sin.

As against these are the tragedies of primarily participative emotion (like those of the French classic drama) that may be called tragedies of plight or compassion or poignancy. These show us great men or women suffering intensely as they try to resolve some deep inner conflict—between love and duty, for instance, religion and patriotism, self-interest and honor. Whether they take the right course or the wrong, the main effect of their story is to awaken in us profound compassion for all who in trying to live both honorably and happily are caught in a heart-rending dramatic dilemma.

Then, again, there are the stories that evoke almost nothing but compassionate pity or pathos: the stories which soften our hearts for the unfortunates of this world—the childish innocent, the bewildered, the destitute, the luckless, the abandoned.

As we run through this register of the darker emotions and study it carefully, we cannot fail to see that the Christian, insofar, at least, as he thinks and feels as he should, cannot help having a far wider and richer experience of them, day in and day out, than can the pagan or the agnostic. For the mental life of the true

Christian is determined, in season and out, by the biblical way of viewing and reacting to reality: the way of awe, tragic fear and pity, and compassion.

Who better than he will have a steady, living sense of the majesty and holiness of God the Father, as this is continuously kept alive in him by his prayerful reading, with the Church, of Job, Isaiah, the Psalms, the Apocalypse, to say nothing of all the other prophetic works or the homilies of the Fathers based on them. The wonder and mystery of God the Creator as this is shown in His works and in all the “great things” He has done for mankind; His blinding holiness; His boundless generosity: all these are kept continuously before the mind of the Christian who daily reads, as he is supposed to do, the sacred scriptures. Moreover, the pattern of the Mass, of the Sacraments, of all his ordinary prayers, especially the Our Father, will serve to maintain in him a determining mood of awe.



HAT THE CHRISTIAN has an intense awareness of the tragedy of guilt as Aristotle understood this, that he will again and again realize how fearfully and pitifully wrong it is for mankind to act as it does, almost goes without saying. So long as he keeps before himself the story of the Redemption, as well as stays aware of the part he has still to play in it as it unfolds day by day in his life, he can never be free of the tragic sense of sin. The *hybris* of Lucifer that led to the *hybris* of Adam and Eve and thence on down to that of even the greatest leaders of the chosen people, Caiaphas included: of this he is regularly reminded time and again in his daily prayer life. And almost every newspaper headline or radio broadcast is likely to make him feel keenly what the present

condition of the world implies about man's rejection of God's love for him. As he participates in the Mass, moreover, an awareness of how tragically we all act is borne in on him, not only by the fact that he is here called on to die to sin if he is to rise with Christ, but also by the fact that this very privilege was won for him by the Cross. His highest action is to share in a Resurrection through a Death: none knows better than he how tragic must be our life that it required to be transfigured by the death of a Divine Redeemer.

As for the Christian's sense of the tragedy of failure, there is no one more aptly situated than he for gazing down the long line of history and meditating on the wreckage of empires, as well as of individual lives, with which it is strewn as a result of man's vain attempt to build the city without the help of the Builder.

The Christian's compassionate awareness of the human plight is sharpened by many realizations. For one thing, he can never forget that, since the Fall, there has ever been and ever will be an unremitting and deadly conflict between good and evil, the Old Man and the New, the City of Man and the City of God. His sense of this is all the keener when he sees (if only for a few moments at Christmas) not only how great is the spread between what could be and what is, but also how easily this spread could be lessened were men simply better men. He knows, too, that being a true person requires hard, unflagging effort; he realizes how hard it is to earn one's humanity, how easy it is to lose it. He is aware, moreover, that so difficult an achievement is it to do one's ordinary job faithfully, uncomplainingly and thoroughly that this form of heroism has been made by Benedict XV a primary test for canonization.

Nor is the Christian unaware of his own plight—of how hard it is for him to “fit in” today, when, inevitably, men

have sought a substitute for the Mystical Body of Christ in the pseudo-mystical body of the Organization. He knows how great is the fortitude required of him and of all good men in bearing witness to the truth in a world full of hypocrisy and error. He well knows how hard it is to cherish Faith when Science seems so satisfactory and relatively inexpensive; to cherish Hope when there seems to be no hope; to have Charity in a world of charity drives and cold wars. Who is more likely to suffer for being what he is than he?



R WHO IS MORE likely to suffer, in sympathy, for others? As a member of a Mystical Body that is communal in its essence, whose principal act of worship is a love-feast, he can surely feel as deeply sympathetic with others as can any other human being, both in their aspirations and in their failings. He can know how they long to be at one and at peace. And he is never likely to be so free of the Old Man as to forget what it is like to know and yield to temptation and to drink the bitter dregs of sin. His Baptism does not snatch him clean out of his human condition; it merely strengthens him to face this and deal with it in mystical union with Christ and his fellow-men.

Moreover, if we are to limit, as some wish us to do, the tragic to the sublime, we can say that here too the Christian is far better off than his unbelieving brother. He can agree that every tragic action must be one of great import; but he can include under this heading, as the unbeliever cannot, the actions of others than the great kings, queens and generals. For to him everyone is a son of God; and everyone who is baptized is a king, a member of “a royal priesthood.” Under the tragic, therefore, he can include far

more than can the pagan or the agnostic, the mortal sin of a swineherd being, to him, no less essentially tragic than the mortal sin of an emperor.

But it may be objected that the Christian simply cannot have a thorough sense of tragedy because, as a Christian, he is necessarily too optimistic. Has he not received, and can he not rejoice in, the Good News? When he is a perfect Christian, is he not characterized by radiant joy? Surely he does not stand, as did the pagan, in awe of vague, ominous, whimsical, jealous gods, who can be placated only by magical rites. Unlike the modern agnostic, he does not harbor the grim thought that there is no God, nor any place to look forward to of lasting peace and joy. He is not oppressed by the haunting fear that life may well be meaningless. He is not chilled by the realization that glory is to be found only in the minds of men, who too will die; or that, though he may seem to be a creature little lower than the angels, he is in fact only an animal a little higher than the apes, with a humaneness that is as illusory as romantic love. How, then, can the Christian be as sensitive to the tragic as are those who suffer from such dark despairs?

The answer is that having a deep sense of the tragic does not mean having the capability of feeling sad about things that are simply not so or simply mysterious. It means being able to respond with due seriousness to reality as known, and as seen to be humbly unfathomable. The Christian, Heaven knows, will always have enough Job-like bewilderment to afford him the pain of uncertainty; but there is no reason to suppose that his tragic sense is inferior to that of the pagan merely because it is roused mainly by what is true rather than by what is not.

Moreover, to say that because the Christian is fundamentally hopeful and optimistic, he cannot be freely responsive

to the tragic is simply to confuse feeling pained and distressed with feeling contemplatively and peacefully serious. The ability to weep over the broken leg of a dog or to enjoy a soap-opera will hardly betoken a sound sense of tragedy.

On the contrary, this sense is perfected by what makes these actions impossible for the Christian; that is, by his Hope. This enables him to look about at the tragedies of real life with a certain unworried charitable contemplativeness that disposes him for adopting the attitude of aesthetic disinterestedness required for viewing the tragedies of make-believe. The horror, melancholy, despair, bitterness, remorse, which the Christian feels in observing his plight on earth are all transfigured in the Hope-inspired contemplation he practices in praying the Psalms; and this exercise makes it easy for him to respond with these emotions properly when they are evoked as the chord-like tones of an experience of aesthetic delight. The greatest tragedy has always been a source of religious-aesthetic experience. As Chesterton has remarked, it is a festival or it is nothing.



HERE IS, FINALLY, one kind of tragic—or, if you will, semi-tragic—experience which the Christian may claim to be his, as it were, by right; for it is one which came into the world with Christianity and does not seem to have been so much as aimed at by literatures untouched by Christianity. It is the effect of being moved to smile and to weep at the same person or action: the mood preeminently awakened by *Don Quixote* and some of the works of Chaucer. And it is an effect peculiar to Christianity for the very good reason that it is only the Christian or the post-Christian who can regard man as a creature who is at once

in the image and likeness of God and a cosmic clown.

If, then, we may say that the tragic sense is not simply a keen awareness of the mysterious, the sombre, the distressing and the macabre, but is that of a religious charitable contemplation which, in the world of fiction, is, as it were, framed in aesthetic delight, then we may

also say that it is the Christian who has this sense at its best. For from his Faith he is given the awe it requires, as well as the appreciation of sin and failure; from Charity, the compassion; from Hope, the contemplative peace. The perfect tragic sense is that of one who responds both to real happenings and to fictional as Our Lord would have him respond.

THE COMING CONVENTION

THE NATIONAL CONVENTION of The Catholic Art Association will be held this year at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, from August 10th to 13th. It is planned to make this a joint meeting with the Architects' Seminar, which was not held last year due to the death of its founder, Father Michael A. Mathis, C.S.C. We hope that this collaboration will strengthen both the Seminar and our own Association in the task of applying Christian principles to the building of American churches. The theme of the convention will be "Achieving Sacred Space", and the program will be centered around considerations of religious architecture and the sense of the sacred. Several notable European scholars are expected to be at Notre Dame at the time and free to participate in our program.

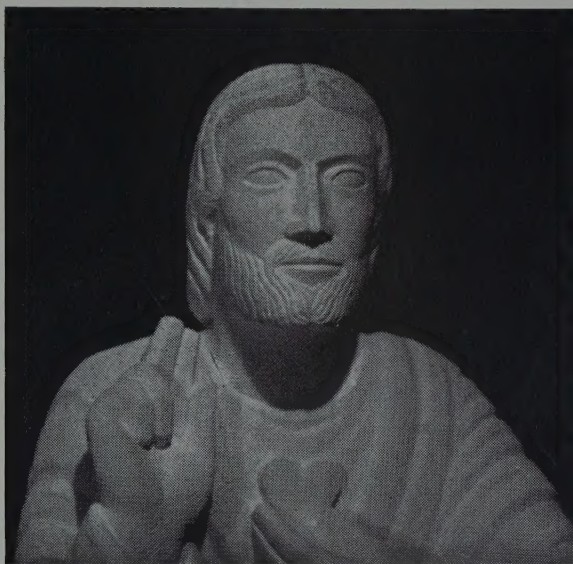
SPRING EQUINOX

Lord of the heavens, curb your headlong pace;
(You lag enough at each solstitial station.)
Now have we comfort, so delay your race,
And weigh the hours with due deliberation,
Balancing days and nights in vast libration.

Now is the time when all the gentle streams
(Not frozen hard with cold, nor parched with heat,) flow out to nourish what your tempered beams,
With earth and air conjoined in measure meet,
In great quadruple harmony complete.

There is no life in either flame or frost.
Your temperate morning airs our needs fulfill;
This vernal rapture soon enough is lost.
Why so much haste to jump from ill to ill,
To summer's deadly heat from winter's chill?

A TRADITIONAL CARVER



ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES we are reproducing photographs of some recent sculptures by Peter Watts, of Bath, England. We have called his work "traditional," and would like to make clear that we use this word in its correct sense. Too often "traditional" is used to describe the most soulless repetition of dead stereotypes, a mechanical imitation of shapes, sounds or phrases that were once spirited and living but are so no more. On the contrary, we mean the use, in any activity, of skills and knowledge acquired in the past without which there can be no improvement in the future.

Those who have been taught that the appreciation of art is shown by facility in comparing one object with another may say; "Oh yes, another imitator of Eric Gill." We would like to point out what grains of truth such a judgment may contain. Peter Watts has indeed been greatly influenced by Eric Gill, but he cannot be called an imitator. The work of both artists originates from the imagi-

nation and is therefore original; it is direct carving, usually in soft stone; it consists in making things rather than the appearances of things; and what is made has a clear and socially valuable use. These are likenesses in method, and often result in likenesses of appearance, though no imitation is intended.

Mr. Watts has recently written; "I have lived all my life in Somerset surrounded by the works of medieval masons. It was only when I saw Gill's work that these old things really clicked, one could not fail to recognize their affinity, the same directness, spontaneity and charm. Gill succeeded, where the Victorian imitators of Gothic had failed, in waking one up to a sense of their vitality. That seems to me tradition in the proper meaning of the word. I now find my own surroundings are of much greater value than libraries or museums, and all this I certainly owe to Gill. Whatever the fruits may be I have certainly taken good root in Somerset earth."



Direct carvers fall into two classes, depending on their preference for hard or soft stone. Mr. Watts is definitely a soft stone man, and prefers the material for which Bath is famous. The broad conception and obviously rapid execution of the figures above are characteristic of soft stone work. Gethsemani Abbey.



Angel descending ladder. This was carved for the West front of Bath Abbey, to replace crumbled medieval work. In the true gothic spirit, Mr. Watts made no attempt to "gothicize" his natural manner, and this attitude was wisely approved by those who employed him. 3'-6" high.

Both photos by Cyril Howe, Bath.



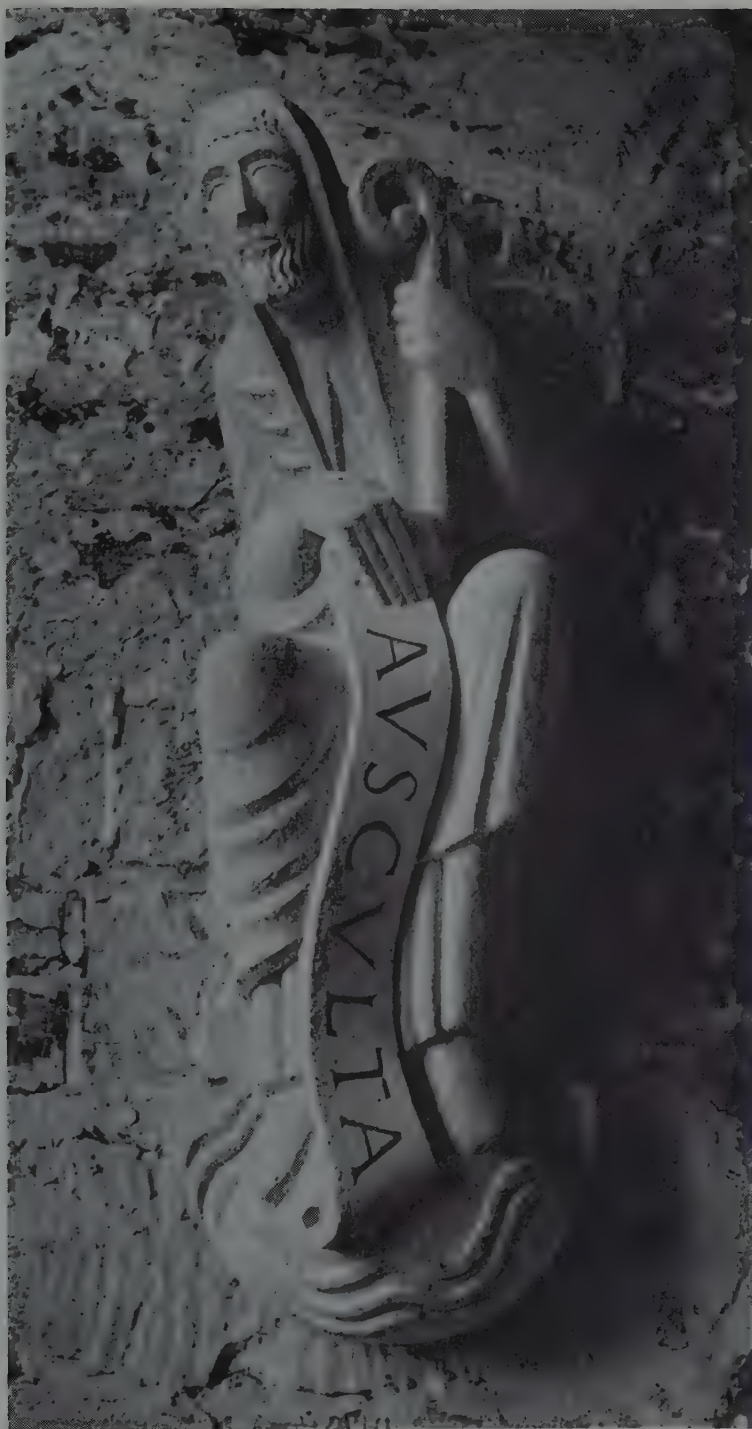
Above is a half-sized study for a group to be placed in the new Abbey church at Saint John's, Collegeville, Minnesota. It represents Saint Augustine of Canterbury, the apostle to the English, baptizing the King of Kent. The final work will be four and a half feet high.

The carving shown on the opposite page appears to great disadvantage against the bad scale and ugly texture of the masonry background. From the photograph, one would hardly guess that the work is six and a half feet high. The group is carefully composed. Both photographs are by Cyril Howe, Bath, England.

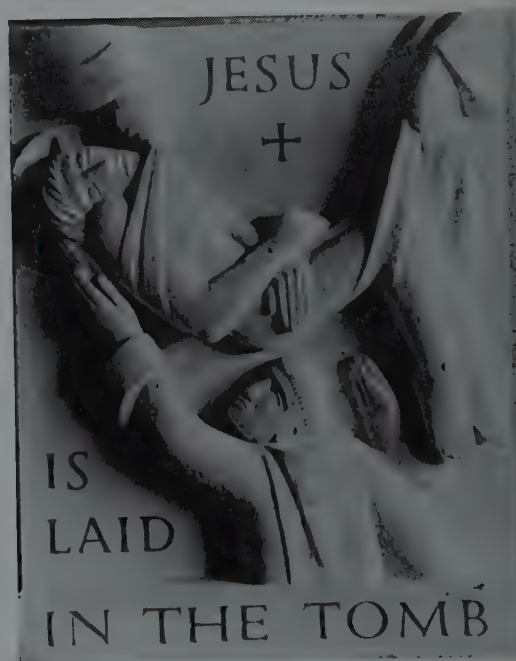
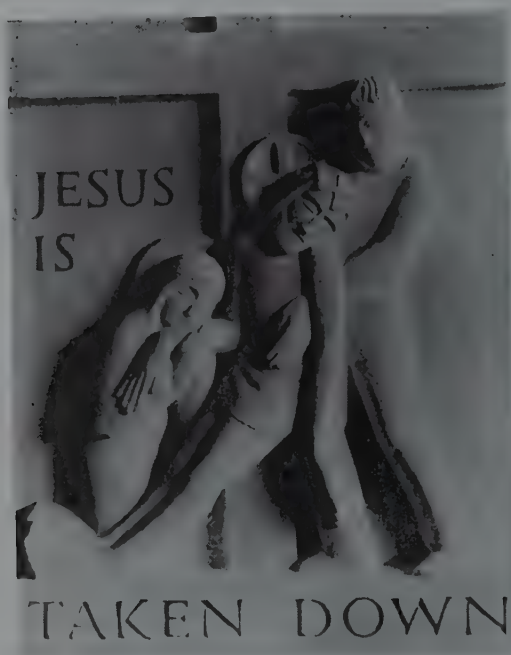
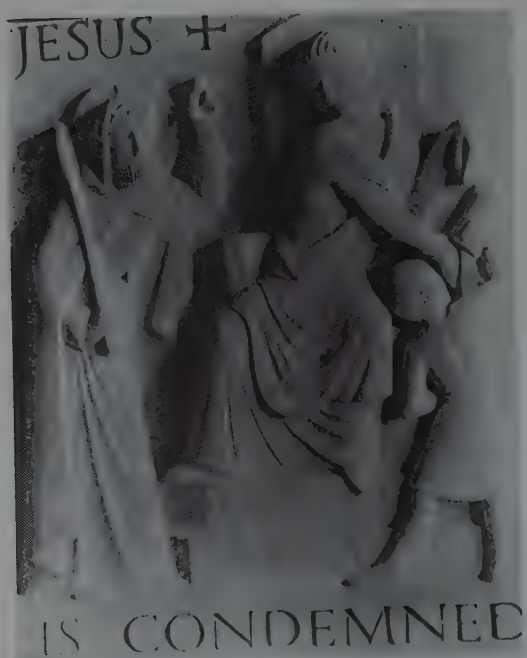




St. Bernard, carved for Gethsemani Abbey, Trappist, Kentucky. This figure shows sureness of stroke, knowledge of material, and a noble spirituality of conception—a rare combination in present day religious sculpture. Three feet high.



St. Benedict, the father of western monasticism, who "gave to a world worn out by slavery the first example of work done by the hands of free man". (Michelet) At Gethsemani. Three feet high.



The first, fourth, thirteenth, and fourteenth Stations of the Cross, from a set made for Gethsemani Abbey. The only available photographs are rather badly cropped, which gives to the composition a false appearance of crowding. The slabs are approximately two feet high and a foot and a half wide.

SYMPTOM, DIAGNOSIS AND REGIMEN

by ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

Outstanding characteristics of our world in a state of chaos are disorder, uncertainty, sentimentality, and despair. Our comfortable faith in progress has been shaken, and we are no longer quite sure that man can live by bread alone. It is a world of "impoverished reality," one in which we go on living as if life were an end in itself and had no meaning. As artists and students of art and as museum curators we are a part of this world and partly responsible for it. Our point of view is one of its symptoms—a sinister word, for symptoms imply disease. Nevertheless, they provide a basis for diagnosis, our only resort when prognosis has been neglected. Let us describe the symptoms, ask of what morbid condition they are an index, and prescribe a remedy.



SYMPTOMATIC ABNORMALITIES in our collegiate point of view include the assumption that art is essentially an aesthetic, that is, sensational and emotional, behavior, a passion suffered rather than an act performed; our dominating interest in style, and indifference to the truth and meaning of works of art; the importance we attach to the artist's personality; the notion that the artist is a special kind of man, rather than that every man is a special kind of artist; the distinction we make between fine art and applied art; and the idea that the nature to which art must be true is, not Creative Nature, but our own immediate environment, and more especially, ourselves.

Within and outside the classroom, we misuse terms, such as "form," "ornament," "inspiration," and even "art." Our naturalistic preoccupations and historical prejudice make it impossible for us to penetrate the arts of the folk and of primitive man, whose designs we admire but whose meanings we ignore because the abstract terms of the myth are enigmatic

to our empirical approach. Our artists are "emancipated" from any obligation to the eternal verities, and have abandoned to tradesmen the satisfaction of present needs. Our abstract art is not an iconography of transcendental forms, but the realistic picture of a disintegrated mentality. Our boasted standard of living is qualitatively beneath contempt, however quantitatively magnificent. And what is, perhaps, the most significant symptom and evidence of our malady is the fact that we have destroyed the vocational and artistic foundations of whatever traditional cultures our touch has infected.

We call these symptoms abnormal, because, when seen in their historical and worldwide perspective, the assumptions of which they are a consequence are actually peculiar, and in almost every detail opposed to those of other cultures, and notably those whose works we most admire. That we can admire Romanesque building—an "architecture without drainage"—at the same time that we despise the mind of the "Dark Age" is anomalous; we do not see that it may be the fault of our mentality that ours is a "drainage without architecture."



THESE SYMPTOMS point to a deep-seated sickness; primarily, the diagnosis must be that of ignorance. By that, of course, we do not mean an ignorance of the facts, with which our minds are cluttered, but an ignorance of the principles to which all operations can be reduced, and must be reduced if they are to be understood. Ours is a nominalist culture; nothing is "real" for us that we cannot grasp with our hands or otherwise "observe." We train the artist, not to think, but to observe; ours is "a rancour contemptuous of immortality." In the train of this fundamental ignorance follow egotism ("Cogito ergo sum"), greed, irresponsibility, and the notion that work is an evil and culture a fruit of idleness.

Our malady, moreover, is one of schizophrenia. We are apt to ask about a work of art two *separate* questions, "What is it for?" and "What does it mean?" That is to divide shape from form, symbol from reference, and agriculture from culture. Primitive man, whose handiwork displays a "polar balance of physical and metaphysical," could not have asked these separate questions. Even to-day the American Indian cannot understand why his songs and ritual should interest us, if we cannot use their spiritual content. Plato considered unworthy of free men, and would have excluded from his ideal state, the practice of any art that served only the needs of the body. And until we demand of the artist and the manufacturer, who are naturally one and the same man, products designed to serve the needs of the body and the soul at one and the same time, the artist will remain a playboy, the manufacturer a caterer, and the workman a snob wanting nothing better than the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table.



AND NOW FOR the regimen. To administer a medicine may take courage when the doctor's business depends on the patient's good will.

To question the validity of the distinction of fine from applied art, or of the artist from the craftsman, is to question the validity of "that monster of modern growth, the financial-commercial state" on which both artist and teacher now depend for their livelihood. Nevertheless, in addressing a body of educators and curators, one must insist upon their responsibility for the teaching of truth about the nature of art and the social function of the artist.

This will involve, amongst other things, a repudiation of the view that art is in any special sense an aesthetic experience. Aesthetic reactions are nothing more than the biologist's "irritability," which we share with the amoeba. For so long as we make of art a merely aesthetic experience or can speak seriously of a *disinterested aesthetic* contemplation, it will be absurd to think of art as pertaining to "the higher things of life." The artist's function is not simply to please, but to present an ought-to-be-known in such a manner as to please when seen or heard, and so expressed as to be convincing. We must make it clear that it is not the artist, but the man, who has both the right and duty to choose the theme; that the artist has no license to say anything not in itself worth saying, however eloquently, that it is only by his wisdom as a man that he can know what is worth saying or making. Art is a kind of knowledge by which we know *how* to do our work, but it does not tell us *what* we need, and therefore ought, to make. So there must be a censorship of art; and if we repudiate a censorship by "guardians"

it remains for us to teach our pupils, whether manufacturers or consumers, that it is their responsibility to exercise a collective censorship, not only of qualities, but of kinds of art as well.

Our obligation demands at the same time a radical change of method in our interpretation of the language of art. No one will deny that art is a means of communication by signs or symbols. Our current methods of analysis are interpretations of these signs in their inverted sense, that is, as psychological expressions, as if the artist had nothing better to do than to make an exhibition of himself to his neighbor or of his neighbor to himself. But personalities are interesting only to their owners, or, at most, to a narrow circle of friends; and it is not the voice of the artist but the voice of the monument, the demonstration of a *quod erat demonstrandum*, that we want to hear.

The art historian is less of a whole man than the anthropologist. The former is all too often indifferent to themes, while the latter is looking for something that is neither in the work of art as if in a place, nor in the artist as a private property, but to which the work of art is a pointer. For him, the signs, constituting the language

of a significant art, are full of meanings; in the first place, injunctive, moving us to do this or that, and in the second place, speculative, that is, referent of the activity to its principle. To expect any less than this of the artist is to build him an ivory tower. Such a habitation may suit him for the moment; but in times of stress we may no longer be able to afford such luxuries; and if he stays in his tower, enjoying his irresponsibility, and should even die of neglect, it may be unlamented and unsung. For if the artist cannot be interested in something greater than himself or his art, if the patron does not demand of him products well and truly made for the good use of the whole man, there is little prospect that art will ever again affect the lives of more than that infinitesimal fraction of the population that cares about the sort of art we have, and no doubt, deserve. There can be no restoration of art to its rightful position as the principle of order governing the production of utilities short of a change of mind on the part of both artist and consumer, sufficient to bring about a reorganization of society on the basis of vocation, that form in which, as Plato said, "more will be done, and better done, than in any other way."



This address by the late Dr. Coomaraswamy was given at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in 1943, and is printed here by the gracious permission of his literary executor.



SOME PARISH SEALS BY

CLEMENS SCHMIDT of Wiesbaden is one of the leading religious graphic artists in the Germany of our times. He was born on the last day of 1901. His father died at the age of forty-six, leaving a widow with nine children to bring up. Clemens was the fifth of these, and was talented, as were the others. In spite of his strong inclination to be an artist he went to work as soon as he was old enough, and from his fourteenth to his nineteenth year had to renounce all immediate hope of doing the creative work to which he felt called. He then left the factory and for the next five years worked in a graphic arts shop, but without pay. In 1928 he was able to transfer to a regular job with the Matthias Grünewald publishing company in Wiesbaden,

where he remained for ten long years.

During this time he had one piece of great good fortune. He was able to take a series of courses at the school of arts at Offenbach under the famous designer Rudolph Koch. Here he was in daily contact with the man who did for German lettering what Edward Johnston had done for English. Indeed Koch was directly in the tradition that Johnston had founded. Here young Schmidt was able to learn the principles and skills that he most desired to possess: about good ornament and undebased heraldry and the true forms of letters and the engraving of wood and metal. And all that he learned in these classes he was able to put at once into practice in the harsh world of depression publishing. He had



CLEMENS SCHMIDT & OTHERS

found a teacher who could unlock the treasure of his artistic heritage.

At thirty-seven he set up shop for himself but was soon drafted into the army for four years of unwilling military service. He got back to his work in 1945, and has remained in it until the present.

As a Catholic, his greatest interest has always been in the restoration of the arts of the Church, and he has used his skill in every kind of ecclesiastical design from stained glass windows and vestments to metal-work. During the dark days of National Socialism this preference brought him into conflict with the anti-Christian pressures of the regime, as religious expression was severely regulated. He was not allowed, for instance, to sell a design

that included such a simple thing as a cross.

One example of the variety of his work, from happier days, is shown in these pages. The bishop of Limburg decided that something should be done about the seals which were used officially in his parishes. These seals were not only uninspired as examples of Christian expression, but were ugly and sometimes almost illegible.

Most of the designs which we reproduce here were made for this program for the restoration of ecclesiastical dignity. They show what can be done. There must be many other dioceses, in Germany and in other lands, where a simple reform of this sort could well take its place in the task of restoring all things to Christ.





Northern European designers have in general greatly surpassed their southern neighbors in their sensitivity to scale and their ability in handling it. Scale means good size-relationship between a thing and its parts, and also between a thing and the conditions of its use. Thus a small object like a jewel, a coin, or a medal must have a relatively large scale so that it will be legible at arm's length. One should not have to peer at it with a lens in order to understand the significance of its parts. If any detail, either emblem or word, is not worth making legible, it should be left out. As far as possible each emblem should be presented in a way that most clearly and simply establishes its identity and meaning—in what is called its "significant profile". These qualities of good scale, legibility, simplicity, and significance are all apparent in these designs by Clemens Schmidt.



The two designs at the left are from the pen of William V. Cladek. The larger one is an example not only of the complication of ideas that are sometimes presented to an artist for integration, but of the very successful solution of such a problem. In this case the artist was required to get into some kind of order the following items: the knotted Franciscan cincture, the sun and moon, the dove of the Holy Spirit, an open book, a lily, a constellation, the tau cross, the Franciscan hands, and a rather long inscription. He has achieved this without losing scale.

The designs on the right are engravings on wood by Philip Hagreen. All the other seals on these pages are designed with the pen or brush, but these two exhibit the quality of graver work. Mr. Hagreen has always maintained that the making of a design for printing should be considered as the making of a tool, and that this tool—the block—should be finished as a thing in its own right, with the same care as any other artifact. Today few designers can follow this counsel of perfection, but the fine result is undeniable. Indeed all artifacts, because they have uses, are tools.

SOME RHODESIAN ICONOGRAPHERS

by EVELYN WAUGH

There have been many attempts to encourage a genuine Christian iconography among the newly baptized members of "primitive" cultures, and almost without exception these attempts have been failures from a qualitative point of view. The would-be artists have tried to please their teachers rather than to attempt the almost heroic effort to apply techniques already familiar to them to quite new subject matter; their imaginations have not been able to work freely and the results are the wretched "mission art" that we know and deplore. Mr. Waugh gives here a brief account of one of the rare successes, and some of the reasons for those successes.



SERIMA MISSION LIES off the main road in the native reserve. It was my companions' first visit. I had been there a year ago and was eager to show them what seemed to me one of the most remarkable enterprises in the country; also to see what progress had been made in the year and to meet the architect, Fr. Groeber, who had been away when I was last there. Serima does not advertise itself or welcome idle sight-seers. It exists for its own people. None of its products is sent out for sale or for exhibition. As far as I know no photographs have ever been published. There are no sign-posts to direct the traveller along the sandy tracks which run through the flat, sparsely grown country.

It is in the diocese of Gwelo, entrusted to the Swiss Bethlehem Fathers. In 1948 Fr. Groeber was sent by his bishop to found and design the Mission. The available funds were, and are, pitifully inadequate. Everything was lacking except space and zeal. The staff at present consists of one other priest, a lay brother skilled in building, and six Mary Ward nuns. They have a school of 170 Mashona boarders and, nearing completion, the

large and remarkable church which we had come to see.

It is this that one first notices as one emerges from the bush, and at first sight it affords no pleasure to an eye such as mine which is dull to contemporary taste. Geometrical, economical, constructed of concrete and corrugated iron, it rises from the centre of its bleak site like the hangar of a deserted airfield.

Fr. Groeber works and sleeps in a single cell opening on the little entrance hall of the main building. His bookshelves are filled with books of ascetic theology and modern art in English, German and French. He is an elderly, serene man. When I said I might be writing something about the place, his welcome became slightly clouded, but he did not forbid me to do so and as he began showing me how he worked, he brightened. In youth he studied architecture in Switzerland and on the day after taking his degree went straight to the seminary, volunteered for the African mission and thought it unlikely he would ever be called to exercise his art. In the last twenty years he has built not only for his own order but for the Jesuits, whose seminary for native priests near Salisbury is from his designs.

This story is reprinted here by courtesy of the author and his publishers from his recent book, A Tourist in Africa, Messrs. Little, Brown and Company, New York, 1960.

But Serima is his particular creation. It is here that he has founded the little school of art which is one of the most exhilarating places in Africa.

During the last weeks I have taken every chance of searching bazaars and pedlar's wares for examples of African sculpture. The best were the work of tribes in Portuguese territory, but they, though skilfully cut, were hopelessly lacking in vision and invention. The same archetypes of animal and human form were repeated again and again. I have seen photographs of figures by natives of the Congo and Uganda which might get exhibited in London and Paris; individual enough, but plainly the work of men who had been shown European sculpture. The savage African art of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries which delighted the European and American connoisseurs of the 1920s, seems as dead as the civilized art of Europe.

There is a mission at Cyrene with wall paintings by native artists which I have not visited. From photographs it seems that they were shown conventional European pictures and encouraged to translate them into local idiom, rather as the Mexican Indians of the sixteenth and seventeenth century were set to work on models of the Spanish Renaissance and Baroque—with agreeably picturesque results, certainly, but without planting a living art, capable of free growth. And the Mexican Indians had a long tradition of many ingenious crafts. The Mashona, among whom Fr. Groeber works have never had an artist, nor any craft except the weaving by the women of grass mats in very simple patterns. Fr. Groeber has been at pains to keep all European models away from his pupils. He has none of the illusions of the recent past, that every man is a natural artist, but in the boys passing through his hands he has found a few—as many perhaps as would be found passing through an English Public

School—who have the genuine aesthetic impulse. At present he has two master-carvers in their mid-twenties and a dozen apprentices in their teens. The sort of carving they produce is symbolic and didactic, like that of the European Middle Ages; entirely novel and entirely African.

Every boy on arrival from his village is told to draw an account of his journey. Many are capable of nothing; some produce pictures not much different from the nursery scrawlings of European children some years their juniors. Those with discernible talent are then taught to control the pencil, the chalk, the pen, the brush; they make abstract symmetrical patterns, they draw 'matchstick' hieroglyphics of figures in action. Perhaps all this is a commonplace of 'progressive' education. I don't know. It was quite new to me. Nothing of the kind happened in the drawing classes of my own youth, which began with copying lithographs of rural scenery and advanced to "free-hand" renderings of still life. Clay modelling is the next stage. The boy's first task is always to make a mask which will 'frighten his little brother.' It is explained to him that it is far easier to make ugly things than beautiful; that, implicitly, the paintings of Mr. Francis Bacon are a rudimentary accomplishment which the Mashona boy must outgrow. The highest achievement is to make something lovable, an image of angel or saint, of Our Lady or Our Lord, before which it is easy to pray. Before this stage is approached the use of the chisel is taught and the composition of ornaments that express a moral lesson or a theological tenet. Art is the catechism and prayer in visible form. There is no suggestion of self-expression or of aesthetic emotion; nor of acquiring a marketable skill or titillating national pride at doing as well as the white man.

The first completed work was the main entrance. Here the concrete walls have



"The aim of the builder is to make a church, not an art school." To him an artist is a useful rather than an "interesting" person. He is at pains to protect his pupils from infection by the White Man's ideas of "art". Hence we can show no photographs. Above is a piece of African work, already exhibited in Rome, which may have some resemblance to the carvings Mr. Waugh describes.

